
Fuel Assistance Programs

A consumer tip sheet



*A Publication of the
Massachusetts
Division of Energy Resources*

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Commonwealth of Massachusetts Programs

The **Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD)** through their **Neighborhood Services Division** oversees a number of energy assistance programs. These programs are administered locally **through Non-Profit Agencies**. To find the **Non-Profit Agency** closest to you, call the **DHCD Heat Hotline at 1-800-632-8175** or click on the [Cold Relief Brochure](#) at www.massfuelassist.com. Specific programs offered are outlined below.

Heating Bill Assistance

The **Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)** operates between November 1st and April 30th, offering financial assistance to residents who are at or below 200% of the federal poverty income level. **LIHEAP** pays benefits based on household income. Local **Non-Profit Agencies** determine income eligibility. These agencies make direct payments on your behalf to your primary vendor (oil, propane, wood, coal, gas, or electric utility). Payments are made up to a maximum dollar amount for eligible households.

Please note: Eligibility for LIHEAP may also qualify customers for the Discount Rates from electric, gas and telephone utilities

Heating System Assistance

Heating Emergency Assistance Retrofit Task Weatherization Assistance Program (HEARTWAP). **HEARTWAP** provides heating system services to low-income households. The program operates year-round through local **Non-Profit Agencies**. Households with incomes up to 175% of the federal poverty income level are eligible for **HEARTWAP**. During the winter months, the program serves primarily as an emergency intervention service, providing low-income households with help for heating system problems. During the spring and summer months, **HEARTWAP** provides heating system maintenance services subject to the availability of funds.

Weatherization Assistance

Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP).

WAP assists low-income households in reducing their heating bills by providing full-scale home energy conservation services (also called weatherization). Households qualifying for **LIHEAP** or receiving Aid to Families with Children or Social Security Income are eligible for WAP. Due to limited funding, priority points are awarded to households with members who are elderly, handicapped, children under the age of seven, or Native Americans. Tenants (with landlord approval) and homeowners are eligible for weatherization. The program also operates year-round through local **Non-Profit** Agencies. Please note that eligibility for this program is 175% of the federal poverty level, LIHEAP is 200%.

Other Energy Assistance Programs

The [Salvation Army's Good Neighbor Energy Fund](#) offers one-time grants for eligible consumers. Call **1-800-334-3047** for more information. In area code 413 call: **1-800-262-1320**.

United Way Boston offers limited assistance to Boston Area residents. Call the First Call for Help Hotline at **1-800-231-4377**.

Citizens Energy allows families to purchase one-time deliveries of discount home heating oil; call **1-877-JOE-4OIL** (1-877-563-4645), for more information.

Other Shopping Options

Even if you are not eligible for the programs described, you may still have options to reduce your heating costs or spread them out over the year.

For Oil Heat Customers

Oil Co-Ops: You may consider joining an oil cooperative (co-op). Co-ops often save their members money on their oil and other services, such as energy efficiency services. They may offer discounts to low-income customers. Many co-ops

also offer discount membership fees for senior citizens.
Below are some co-ops operating in Massachusetts:

[Mass. Energy Consumers Alliance](#)

1-800-287-3950

(Formerly Boston Oil Consumer Alliance)

Comfort Crafted Oil Buying Network

1-800-649-7473

Cape Self Reliance Corporation

1-888-808-0120

Pioneer Valley Heating Oil Cooperative

1-413-545-0865

(Administered by UMASS Community Services)

Center for Ecological Technology

1-413-445-4556

(For complaints or problems about fixed-price contracts or other heating oil issues, call the **Attorney General's Office at 617-727-8400**)

Budget Payment Plans: Some dealers offer payment plans, allowing you to pay your heating bill over time rather than at the time of delivery. Check with your dealer to see whether this option is available for you.

For Natural Gas Customers

[The Department of Telecommunications and Energy](#) approves Natural Gas rates.

Contact your utility to see if you qualify for the discount rate. Natural Gas customers may also qualify for **LIHEAP** and other energy assistance programs offered by gas utilities.

Consumers can also check with their gas utility/distribution company to see whether they offer Level-Pay (or Budget) Billing. This option allows customers to pay the same amount each month for natural gas. Each year your gas company will reconcile your bill. Then you will receive a credit (if you overpaid) or a bill (if you underpaid) for the balance.